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ABSTRACT

A study examined how students developed as readers from their own point of view. Reader autobiographies and questionnaires were collected from 272 advanced, general, and basic level 12th-grade high school students from a variety of high schools in the state of Georgia. In addition, three students who were characteristic of the three types of readers (avid, lukewarm, and nonreader) were interviewed. Results indicated that: (1) avid readers had the most positive attitudes toward reading followed by lukewarm readers and then nonreaders; (2) factors that spurred extrinsic and intrinsic motivations to get students to read were interesting reading materials, summer reading clubs and book fairs, being read to, free reading, and the desire to acquire life knowledge; (3) avid readers were also motivated by assigned readings; (4) factors that caused lukewarm and nonreaders to be turned off to reading were assigned reading and being forced to read aloud in class; and (5) the main reason subjects did not read was that they were too busy with other activities. (Ten tables of data are included. Contains 44 references.) The questionnaire is attached. (RS)

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Exploring the Reading Development of 12th-grade Georgia High School Students Through Reader Autobiographies

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March 15, 1993

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Abstract

Reader autobiographies and questionnaires were collected from 272 advanced, general, and basic level twelfth-grade high school students from a variety of high schools in the state of Georgia. In addition three students who were characteristic of the three types of readers were interviewed. Findings from analyses of autobiographies, questionnaires, and interviews addressed seven research questions and identified common early reading experiences; students' preschool, elementary, junior high, and high school reading interests; extrinsic and intrinsic motivations to read; intrinsic and extrinsic reasons not to read; and positive and negative school reading experiences. The findings led to suggestions for helping students of every ability level become avid readers.

Exploring the Reading Development of 12th-grade Georgia High School Students Through Reader Autobiographies

In 1899 Vostrovsky (p. 535) noted that when reading preferences are left up to chance, "the tendency is often towards a selection of books which unfit one for everyday living . . . ." This concern for the development of readers has been with us for a very long time. Studies from Vostrovsky's through those of today tell us a great deal about what students like to read. We can now accurately tell the reading preference of many students by age, sex, and intelligence. Also, research findings have been consistent about the factors in the development of avid readers. Most studies have tended to focus on students during a narrow time period (elementary, junior high, or high school years) or on a narrow group of students, usually advanced. Other research has focused on areas of reading interest of large groups of students and not on their development as readers.

My goal as a researcher was to understand how students developed as readers from their own point of view. Specifically, this study addressed the question: how do avid readers develop in contrast to lukewarm and/or nonreaders? Using a phenomenological approach, I sought to determine what the students considered to be important factors in their development as readers. Analyses of reader autobiographies, questionnaires, and interviews with Georgia 12th-grade students developed ideas for helping students of every

ability level become avid readers and addressed the following questions:

* What attitudes do the three types of 12th-grade readers have toward reading?
* What early life experiences with reading did the three types of 12th-grade readers have?
* What factors motivate the three types of readers to read?
* What reasons do the three types of readers have not to read?
* What positive reading experiences have the three types of readers had in school?
* What negative reading experiences have the three types of readers had in school?
* What suggestions do the three types of readers have for changing school reading experiences?

Background

This study was influenced primarily by studies that looked at the development of avid readers and how students select books.

The Development of Avid Readers

The research is united in finding home environment as the most important factor in developing avid readers. Durkin (1966) studied 5103 students in 61 schools from September 1958 to June 1964. From tests given during the first two

weeks of the first grade, she identified 49 readers from the 5103. The significant findings of home interviews were that all 49 students had been read aloud to from an early age, owned story books, and most could print. Also, a significant number of parents described themselves as avid readers.

In a follow-up study, Durkin (1966) used a control group so that early readers and nonreaders could be compared. From 5000 New York first graders, she found 156 readers. From theses 156, she randomly selected 30 to be matched with a control group of nonreaders. From comparisons of home interviews, she found that every early reader had been read aloud to by their parents, and that these parents described themselves as reading more than average. Durkin also found the mother to be the biggest influence on the early readers. More of these mothers had completed college and felt they had the time to answer their children's literacy questions. The nonreaders had not been read to as often or had their literacy questions answered. The reason most often given by parents for not reading or answering literacy questions was that they were "too busy."

Plessas and Oakes (1964) used Durkin's (1961) interim report as a guide to their study that found that all of their early readers had been read to at home and came from homes that had a literature rich environment.

Six other studies duplicated Durkin's (1966) in the United States, Canada, Australia, and Israel. These studies by King (1972), Briggs and Elkind (1973 & 1977), Wells (1981

& 1982), and Feitelson (1986) supported Durkin's basic findings that a literate home environment that featured frequent reading aloud better predicted school success than did socioeconomic level, I.Q., or race. These studies also found that mothers are more influential on children's reading than fathers and that mothers' educational levels had a significant correlation with children's school success while fathers' educational levels did not. Other significant home factors were number of children's books in the home, someone who answered children's literacy questions, and frequent family library use.

Studies by Howden (1967), Sherrill (1981), Jobe (1982), Powell, Taylor, & McMillen (1984), Thompson (1984), Neuman (1986), Nunn (1986),and Shiring (1986) also support Durkin's findings.

Hewison (1983) studied the effects on readers of home environments that were not literature rich. In the creation of readers with poor reading skills, he cites a lack of parental interest in their children's education, non-reading parents and a home that has few books, parents who create an "impoverished language environment," and single-parent homes or homes where both parents work. In addition to families' effect on reader development, there are differences in individual's development as readers based on their intelligence level.

Swanton (1984) found that gifted students use the public library more than regular students, and that gifted students

own more books than regular students. Access to books is important for the reading development of all students, and not just for gifted students.

Positive adult reading and library use can be predicted by the following childhood factors: read to often as a child, accompanied by a parent to the library, frequent library use as children, began using the library at a young age, mother and/or father avid readers, and easy access to a library (Powell, Taylor, & McMillen, 1984). Strang (1942) also found accessibility to reading materials to be one of the most important factors influencing reading.

In a large two-part study that surveyed 3,050 10- and 13-year-olds from 15 countries, Greaney and Neuman (1990) identified three distinct factors that motivated students to read. They found that students read for utility, enjoyment, and escape.

In addition to the influence of home environment in developing readers, schools also can have a positive effect on reader development through teacher enthusiasm (Purves and Beach, 1972) and teachers being seen as readers and having a positive attitude towards reading and the students themselves (McMillen and Sloan, 1980)

Selecting Books

Research is just as consistent in its findings concerning methods students use to choose books. Younger students (elementary and junior high) rely more on

recommendations of adults than do high school students (Burgess 1985). Also, elementary students select books by reading book covers, by author, and by the book's appearance. Teachers often have a negative effect on elementary students' book selection through the use of reading lists that restrict all students choices and lists that force good readers to read from a narrow list of more challenging books (Burgess, 1985; Gallo, 1968; Nunn 1986), but can have a positive effect when they show enthusiasm for reading and books (Broening, 1934; Cappa, 1958; Carsley 1957; Coast, 1928; Nunn, 1986; Woolcock 1963). High school students move away from adult recommendations to those of friends being the most influential (Gallo, 1968; Ross and Simone, 1982; Stachelek, 1976; Woolcock 1963).

With the exceptions of Sherrill (1981) and Shiring (1986), research focuses on readers during a period of a few years. Their studies focused on the development of only avid readers. This study involved the development of avid, lukewarm, and nonreaders from their earliest memories to their senior year in high school.

Methods

This study examined the development of different types of readers, as reflected by reader autobiographies from advanced, general, and basic level high school seniors in five Georgia high schools as well as their responses to a 50-item questionnaire (see Appendix) dealing with their

development as readers. To provide triangulation, I also interviewed three students who were identified by their reader autobiographies and questionnaires as being representative of the three types of readers in this study:

* avid reader--A student who regularly uses a portion of his/her leisure time reading books for pleasure. This type of reader has made books and literature an important part of their everyday life.
* lukewarm reader--A student who considers him/herself to have adequate reading skills, but for whom leisure reading is an infrequent activity. This type of reader reads primarily for information or to fulfill class assignments.
* nonreader--A student who reads below his/her grade level to the point that reading of any type is an infrequent occurrence. The bulk of the voluntary reading done by nonreaders consists of occasional reading of newspapers and magazines.

Participants

Advanced, general, and basic level high school seniors were included to maximize the sample's diversity among avid, lukewarm, and nonreaders. High school seniors were chosen to insure that reading memories from as much of the public school experience as possible were collected. Included were 272 students from five geographically and demographically divergent Georgia high schools including urban, suburban, and rural schools. To insure that I was using a representative

sample of Georgia's twelfth-grade students, I followed the guidelines used by the State Department of Education for obtaining a representative sample of public schools in Georgia. This information came from the state's language arts coordinator who also provided information on Georgia high school's participation in the free and reduced lunch program. This geographic and economic information allowed me to choose schools that would provide a representative sample both geographically and economically. The individual classes that were used from these schools were chosen on the basis of teachers' willingness to participate.

School One is a rural school in east central Georgia with an enrollment of approximately 900 students, 55 percent of whom take part in the free and reduced lunch program. School Two is located in southeastern Georgia in a small coastal town and had a student body of approximately 1,400 students of which only 18 percent took part in the free and reduced lunch plan. School Three is located in a medium sized town in the mountains of northwestern Georgia. The school has an enrollment of approximately 800 students of which only 28 percent take part in the free and reduced lunch plan. School Four is a large suburban high school in an affluent community outside of the state capitol. The school has an enrollment of approximately 1,500 students with only 6 percent of the students taking part in the free and reduced lunch plan. School Five is a large high school (approximately 1,400 students) located in a medium-sized town

Table 1

Question 30 (number and % of reading types per ability levels).

Reading Type	Gender/Race	Advanced	General	Basic
Avid Reader	**total**	47/50%	27/30%	18/21%
	male	13/34%	12/24%	6/15%
	wm	12/48%	10/30%	3/18%
	bm	1/8%	2/13%	3/14%
	female	34/61%	15/36%	12/25%
	wf	27/66%	11/46%	3/16%
	bf	5/42%	3/20%	7/28%
	of	2/67%	1/33%	2/50%
Lukewarm Reader	**total**	47/50%	59/65%	57/66%
	male	25/66%	34/69%	26/67%
	wm	13/52%	20/61%	11/65%
	bm	12/92%	14/88%	15/69%
	female	22/39%	25/60%	31/65%
	wf	14/34%	11/50%	14/74%
	bf	7/58%	11/73%	16/64%
	of	1/33%	3/67%	1/25%
Nonreader	**total**	0/0%	5/6%	12/14%
	male	0/0%	3/6%	7/18%
	wm	0/0%	3/9%	3/18%
	bm	0/0%	0/0%	4/18%
	female	0/0%	2/5%	5/10%
	wf	0/0%	1/4%	2/11%
	bf	0/0%	1/7%	2/8%
	of	0/0%	0/0%	1/25%

in southwest Georgia. The school is located in an impoverished neighborhood as reflected by the fact that 63 percent of the students take part in the free and reduced lunch plan.

The total student sample consisted of 126 males (51 black and 75 white) and 146 females (52 black, 83 white, and 11 "other"). Table 1 gives a breakdown of the students by reader type, gender, race, and class level.

To choose students for the interviews, I needed three students who were representative of the three types of readers. While analyzing the reading autobiographies, I was able to identify two students who were representative of avid and lukewarm readers. I chose these two students because of the clarity with which they described themselves as readers. In writing about his experiences with reading, the avid reader wrote, "I've read so many books I can't begin to name them. I've read everything from Mother Goose to William Shakespeare and just about everything in between. There have been many a night I've stayed up until two and three in the morning just reading a good book." The lukewarm reader described himself as someone who reads just to fulfill school assignments when he wrote, "When I started Junior High School I started to realize that reading was a part of my education and that in order to pass I had to read. So I started reading more in junior high than I did in elementary school. In high school I had to read outside and inside of class.

Thats all we did in English and we still do." Unable to choose one student who was a better representative of nonreaders than any of the others, I chose a nonreader who was representative of the other nonreaders and who had described herself as a nonreader. "In high school I don't like it (reading) very much. I read very rarely and as the years go on I like reading less." Because these selections were subjective, I corroborated my selections by checking against the students' self categorization on the questionnaire. I interviewed these three students after completing my analyses of the reader autobiographies and questionnaires.

Data Collection Procedures

The procedures for this study were based on those used by Carlsen to obtain his reader autobiographies (Sherrill, 1981), and Glaser and Strauss's (1967) "constant comparative" method of data analysis. I tested Carlsen's procedures during a pilot study at a local high school using advanced, general, and basic level senior English classes.

The results of the pilot study led to the formation of the procedures used in this study to collect data in the five schools. The data collection took place during the students' English classes. First, students completed the biographic information on the cover of their writing packets. They then read along as I read the following directions for completing their reading autobiographies:

> Tell me about your experiences with reading. Try to remember experiences you had before you started school, experiences you had in elementary school, experiences you had in junior high school, experiences you had in high school, and experiences you have had outside of school. Don't worry about correct grammar and spelling or putting your memories in any particular order; just write freely, and spill out your memories as they occur to you.

Following these directions, they wrote their autobiographies. As soon as the students completed their autobiographies, they answered the 50-item questionnaire (see Appendix). These procedures were followed in all fifteen English classes.

Data Analysis

To analyze the reading autobiographies, I used Glaser and Strauss' (1967) "constant comparative" method (pp. 101-115). This method allows categories to be drawn from the data rather than be imposed upon the data by the researcher. From the analysis of different types of raw data, a substantive theory can be formed.

The first step in my analysis was to read the reading autobiographies. As I read them I listed possible categories in the margins. I then reread the autobiographies adding new categories as I found them and making changes in the categories I had already identified when necessary. This

process continued until I felt I neither missed nor mislabeled any categories. These categories were then recorded on notecards where I listed the student's number, school, race, and sex from the autobiography where I found the category. To simplify the analysis, I recorded advanced level students' information in black, general level students' in red, and basic level students' in orange.

From here I began collapsing similar subcategories into a single subcategory. This continued until I had all the similar subcategories grouped. At this point I gave a title for each group of subcategories that described what factors the group collectively dealt with. This process continued until I had a group of titles that served as headings for major categories. Once I felt I had major categories that described all data found in the autobiographies, I compared each subcategory to its major categories to verify its fit. Subcategories that did not fit were tried under other major categories until each subcategory fit under one of the major categories. The process was complete when I felt that all data could be described in a manner that addressed the study's research concerns.

The next step was to analyze the questionnaires. This was done by first dividing students into groups of avid, lukewarm, and nonreaders based on their response to question 30:

* Which of the following descriptions best describes you as a reader?

  a. I spend a large portion of my free time reading for pleasure, and consider reading and literature an important part of my life.

  b. I read primarily for information or to fulfill class assignments.

  c. I rarely if ever read.

Each student's response was compared to his/her autobiography to ensure that the division by reader type was correct. In the three cases where there was a discrepancy between the two, the students were reclassified based on the information in their autobiographies. The three groups were then broken down by gender and race, and the responses on each answer sheet were coded onto a chart that displayed the total responses of each group of reader types by gender and race. The chart was further analyzed using Lotus Spreadsheet computer software to record how readers in each group responded to the questionnaires. This analysis recorded the percentage of readers who responded a certain way to each question and broke these findings down by reader type, gender, and race.

Questions 31--50 make up Estes' (1972) assessment of attitudes toward reading (see Appendix). I used Estes' instrument without modification and arrived at an attitude score for the students by reader type, gender, and race. This completed my analysis of the questionnaire, and the

results of this analysis were then compared and contrasted with findings from autobiographies. Findings from questionnaires that support the findings of autobiographies were noted, and findings that came out of specific questions that were not present in the autobiographies were reported. There were no findings coming from questionnaires that disagreed with findings of the autobiographies.

The final stage of analysis dealt with the interviews with the representatives of each reader type. The interviews were taped and then transcribed. The transcriptions were analyzed in the same manner as the autobiographies, and the findings were compared to those coming from autobiographies and questionnaires. Supporting findings were noted; there were no findings that disagreed with those coming from autobiographies and/or questionnaires. The purpose of the questionnaire and interviews was to provide additional information and to allow triangulation of the methods of data collection.

Findings

In devising a guideline to determine which categories and subcategories of information were to be reported, I decided on one that was both objective and subjective. Arbitrarily, I decided to report any category or subcategory that was reported by at least 15 students, dealt with any of the research questions, and/or that I found to be interesting. These findings were all supported by a quote or

quotes from an autobiography or autobiographies that clearly described a particularly vivid memory of a reading experience. Findings are presented in rank order. The number of each type of reader who cited a subcategory is given along with the percentage of that type of reader the number represents. Interesting data cited by fewer than fifteen students are listed in rank order in their appropriate categories under the subheading "Other."

Student quotations are copied from autobiographies just as students wrote them with information to insure clear meaning added in brackets. The information in parenthesis at the end of each quote denotes the type of reader (A--avid, L--lukewarm, or N--nonreader), school number, and student's number in that order. The information from the questionnaire and interviews is integrated into the findings of the autobiographies.

Types of Readers

Based on students' responses to question 30, 60% (163) of students described themselves as lukewarm readers, 34% (92) as avid readers, and only 6% (17) as nonreaders. Another perception of the students as readers was formed by an analysis of their attitudes toward reading as revealed by their responses to questions 31--50.

Attitudes Toward Reading

* What attitudes do the three types of 12th-grade readers have toward reading?

The Estes (1972) scale can produce scores between 20 and 100 with higher scores denoting more positive attitudes toward reading. On this scale, the top 20% of the scores represent a very positive attitude toward reading while the bottom 20% represent a very negative attitude toward reading. For the students in this study, avid readers had a mean score of 81, lukewarm readers 71, and nonreaders 62.

Analysis of questions 30--50 give a clearer picture of students as readers both individually and as members of specific reader groups. Analysis of the autobiographies, interviews, and other questions help to answer questions about how these different readers developed, what and when they read, what motivates them to read or not read, and what suggestions they have for ways teachers and parents can help students read more and enjoy it more. The findings of this study are presented in the sequence of the research questions addressed.

Earliest Reading Memories

* What early life experiences with reading did the three types of 12th-grade readers have?

Students' earliest reading memories centered primarily on home, with a few focusing on preschool or kindergarten. Students reported in their autobiographies that they were

read to, usually by their mother, pretended to read by telling the story, learned to read before beginning school and in school, and read to and with other children. The subcategories in this section are organized in chronological order, not rank order.

Being Read to

This category was reported by more students than any other in this study with 70 of the students (29%) reporting that their earliest experience with reading came when someone read to them as young children before entering school. Of these 70 students, 35 were avid readers (38%), 30 lukewarm readers (18%), and five nonreaders (29%). While these students remembered being read to by a variety of people, 37 (46%) of them reported they were most often read to by their mothers. "When I was little my mother use to read me stories concerning the good and bad of life. I remember little stories about ragady andy and the little engine that could (L, 1, 8)." This information was also supported in interviews where all three students reported that they were read to by their mothers.

How often students were read to from ages one through five was addressed by question 3 of the questionnaire which found that 52% of the students were read to at least three times per week (see Table 2). In a majority of the

Table 2

Question 3 (amount read to ages 1-5).

Possible Answers	Avid	Lukewarm	Nonreaders	All
a) Very seldom (fewer than once per month)	11%	16%	24%	14%
b) Seldom (1-3 times per month)	3%	15%	12%	11%
c) Occasionally (1 time per week)	15%	28%	35%	24%
d) Often (3-5 times per week)	38%	31%	12%	33%
e) Very often (5-7 times per week)	33%	11%	18%	19%

autobiographies, being read to as a small child was seen as a positive experience. Watching and listening to others read caused many of the students to make their relationship with reading move from being passive listeners to becoming active mimics.

Pretending to Read

The desire to read was evident in four avid readers (4%), nine lukewarm readers (6%), and 2 nonreaders (12%) who reported that they would often pretend to read because they wanted to read so badly. From passive listeners and active mimics, students moved on to a relationship with reading that was an interaction between themselves and the text.

Learning to Read

This desire to learn to read led 18 avid readers (20%) and 10 lukewarm readers (6%) to learn to read before they

entered school. Of these 28 students, 8 (29%) credited their mothers as being the person who helped them the most to learn to read. This finding echoes Nunn's (1986) findings. After learning to read from someone else, reading often continued to be an activity shared with others.

Motivations to Read

* What factors motivate the three types of readers to read?

Motivations to read reported by students in their autobiographies fall into two subcategories, extrinsic and intrinsic motivations. Extrinsic motivations to read make up the largest subcategory and consist of outside forces that influence students' reading. The smaller subcategory, intrinsic motivations, consists of motivations within the individual student that cause him or her to read.

Extrinsic Motivations

Extrinsic motivations reported by students include reading materials, people, programs, and environments that caused students to read. Subcategories of motivations mentioned by at least fifteen students will be discussed in rank order with the most cited one being presented first. Those cited by fewer than fifteen students that I found interesting will be discused under the subcategory "Other." This organizational format will be followed for the remainder of the study.

Interesting Reading Material.

Interesting reading material was the most powerful "immediate" motivation for reading reported in the autobiographies. "In conclusion, before high school I really didn't like to read and I seldome pressed to do so, but once I began to read I feel my attitude has changed. I enjoy reading now, if its the right book (L, 2, 29)." Five avid readers (5%), 15 lukewarm readers (9%), and 1 nonreader (6%) stated this preference.

Summer Reading Clubs and Book Fairs.

One important reading motivator during the elementary years for eight avid readers (9%), seven lukewarm readers (4%), and one nonreader (6%) were summer reading clubs at public libraries and book fairs at their schools. This was supported by the interviews where all three students reported that they took part in summer reading clubs. Summer reading clubs and book fairs put kids in contact with literature, but did so in such a way they were strong reading motivators.

Use of the public library was explored in question four in the questionnaire where 23% of the students reported that, between the ages of one and five, their mother and/or father took them to the library at least once every two weeks (see Table 3).

Table 3

Question 4 (trips to the library with a parent).

Possible Answers	avid	lukewarm	nonreaders	All
a) Very seldom (fewer than 1 time every 2 months)	36%	43%	71%	42%
b) Seldom (1 time every 2 months)	10%	17%	12%	14%
c) Occasionally (1 time per month)	20%	24%	12%	22%
d) Often (1 time every 2 weeks)	26%	16%	6%	19%
e) Very often (1-2 times)	9%	6%	0%	3%

A more natural type of reading motivation is the encouragement of family members. Like having reading materials readily available, family encouragement to read is a constant positive motivation.

Other.

Extrinsic motivations to read that were cited by fewer than fifteen students but that were interesting enough to be mentioned (in rank order) were: encouragement to read from family members; one special book or genre of literature; books in the home--easy access to books; prizes, awards, and certificates; parents who are avid readers; enthusiastic teachers; older siblings that read; and pressure to read from others.

A related issue explored in the questionnaire was who were the biggest influences on students' reading in elementary/junior high school (question 7) and in high school

(question 21). The response to this question is interesting because the results disagree with the research that finds that friends are the biggest influence on high school students' reading (see Table 4). Only 12% of students in this study chose friends as biggest influence on their reading in high school.

Table 4

Questions 7 and 21 (influences on reading)

Type of Reader	Mother and/ or Father	Friends	Librarians	Teachers	Other
Avid	31%/11%	19%/19%	2%/0%	30%/45%	18%/26%
Lukewarm	23%/10%	9%/9%	5%/1%	58%/64%	5%/15%
Nonreader	24%/31%	6%/0%	0%/0%	65%/50%	6%/19%
All	22%/11%	12%/12%	4%/1%	53%/57%	9%/19%

Note. The first percentage in each pair represents student responses to question 7 (elementary/ junior high school). The second percentage in each pair represents their responses to question 21 (high school).

Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivations come from within the individual reader and are based on the individual's desire to obtain something of value from reading. These personal rewards could range from an improved material lifestyle to an improved mental and/or spiritual life to simple recreational pleasure. Using the format for discussion as used for extrinsic motivations, the subcategories are rank ordered.

Desire For Life Knowledge.

In stark contrast to those who see the escape and exercising of imagination books provide as motivations to read, 6 avid (7%) and 13 lukewarm readers (5%) felt an important motivation to read is to learn about and to succeed in life and to extend their knowledge about things. "I like to read because it extends your knowledge to greater heights, and that's what every man, boy, girl, and women need (L, 5, 16)."

Under the category of reading to extend knowledge, question 24 in the questionnaire found 14% of students responded that in high school they read primarily to obtain information (see Table 5).

Table 5

Question 24 (high school students' reading motivations).

Reading Motivations	Avid	Lukewarm	Nonreader	All
a) Pleasure	57%	10%	6%	25%
b) To fulfill class assignments	19%	71%	75%	53%
c) To obtain information	8%	17%	19%	14%
d) Other	17%	2%	0%	7%

In direct opposition to the motivation to read to learn about and succeed in the real world were two other motivations to read.

Other.

Extrinsic motivations to read that were cited by fewer than fifteen students but that were interesting enough to be mentioned (in rank order) were: reading to escape the everyday world and reading to exercise the imagination. Like students' motivations for reading, reasons not to read are both extrinsic and intrinsic.

Reasons Not to Read

* What reasons do the three types of readers have not to read?

Students cited a number of reasons not to read including extrinsic and intrinsic reasons. These reasons included being too busy to read, rather be busy than read, and school did not push reading.

Intrinsic Reasons

Too Busy to Read in High School.

Supporting previous research, the most frequent reason given for not reading was that students were too busy to read. "To be honest I really have slacked up on reading lately. I don't have the time I use to have, but I plan on going to get some mystery book real soon (L, 1, 13)." Fourteen avid (15%) and fifteen lukewarm readers (9%) reported that because of extracurricular and social activities, school assignments, and jobs, students were too

busy to read. This finding is confirmed in interviews where the avid and nonreader discussed the problem of finding enough time to read in high school. "When you get up in high school, your time goes everywhere: church, other school work - English is not the only class - you've got six other classes (A, 3, 15)."

Being too busy to read is an intrinsic reason because students make the choice to take part in activities other than independent reading. Avid readers eventually make time to read while lukewarm and nonreaders do not read simply because they would rather do other things.

Extrinsic Reason Not to Read

Although the only extrinsic reason not to read was not cited by fifteen students, I feel it is important to report because it paints a damning portrait of how some schools do little to motivate students to read independently or to develop a reading habit. Five lukewarm readers (3%) and one avid reader (1%) attributed their lack of desire for independent reading to the fact reading was not emphasized while they were in junior high school. "In junior high we learned more about grammar and didn't worry too much on reading. We needed to learn the punctuation of English to be able to read a sentence correctly. Then I began hating to read more and more (L, 5, 4)." This group reported the emphasis in their junior high English classes was on grammar and reading skills and not on reading literature.

Question 15 addressed frequency of outside reading during elementary and junior high years (see Table 6). Predictably, 79% of the avid readers read often or very often as compared to 27% lukewarm readers and 6% nonreaders.

In contrast to the students' remarks about the lack of emphasis placed on reading in some schools, students reported numerous positive reading experiences that took place in school.

Table 6

Question 15 (how often students read on their own in elem. and jr. hg. school).

Types of Readers	Very seldom	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Very Often
Avid readers	1%	4%	15%	34%	46%
Lukewarm readers	21%	16%	37%	19%	8%
Nonreaders	41%	35%	18%	0%	6%
All	16%	13%	29%	23%	20%

Positive School Reading Experiences

* What positive reading experiences have the three types of readers had in school?

Avid, lukewarm, and nonreaders remembered positive school reading experiences. These experiences included assigned readings, being read to, and free reading.

Assigned Reading

Sixteen avid readers (17%) and eight lukewarm readers (5%) attributed assigned reading for motivating them to read. Question 22 found avid readers were the only group that held positive feelings for assigned reading. "I will read anything that captures my eyes. And if I start reading something I want to finish it. My 12grade reading experiences I must say are the best, I must say. We read so many different stories and all of them have been good so far (A, 1, 13)." Fifty-four percent responded that they enjoyed assigned readings often or very often compared to only 25% of lukewarm warm readers and 6% of nonreaders who felt the same (see Table 7).

Table 7

Question 22 (how often students enjoy assigned reading).

Type of Reader	Very seldom	Seldom	Occasionally	Often	Very often
avid	8%	14%	24%	34%	20%
lukewarm	26%	15%	34%	20%	5%
nonreader	50%	19%	25%	0%	6%
all	21%	15%	30%	23%	10%

Being Read to Aloud

Two avid (2%), thirteen lukewarm (8%), and two nonreaders (12%) reported they enjoyed being read to at some point in their lives. "I don't actually remember any

particular book I read myself, but I can remember every week my class would go to the library and the librarian would read to us and I do remember that I loved that (L, 4, 4)!" At the high school level, lukewarm and nonreaders credited listening to someone read aloud for helping them to better comprehend material.

The interviews supported these data with all three students reporting they enjoyed being read to by a parent or teacher. At the high school level, listening to a teacher read literature aloud is viewed as a positive experience by 43% of the students as opposed to only 11% who view it as a negative reading experience (see Table 8).

Table 8

Question 29 (effect of teachers reading aloud).

Types of readers	+	/	-
Avid	37%	50%	13%
Lukewarm	48%	43%	9%
Nonreader	29%	63%	8%
All	43%	46%	11%

Note. + = positive reading experience, / = neutral reading experience, and - = negative reading experience.

Other

An extrinsic motivation to read cited by fewer than fifteen students that was interesting enough to be mentioned

was students' positive memories of free reading time in class. Just as students remembered positive reading experiences in school, they also remembered school reading experiences that were negative.

Negative School Reading Experiences

* What negative reading experiences have the three types of readers had in school?

Some of the negative school reading experiences remembered were assigned reading, reading aloud, and book reports.

Assigned Reading

Fourteen avid readers (15%), thirty-four lukewarm readers (21%), and four nonreaders (23%) cited assigned reading as a negative reading experience. This was a far higher response than for any other subcategory. These data were supported by interviews, "As I started getting into English classes in the junior high I hated to read because I was made to read lame books that I couln't connect with in any way. These books were suppose to teach us certain things. When I got in high school the problem multiplied. Everytime a teacher mentions reading a book the response is "I HATE READING." It seems like for books that teach things and improve you, they are always boring and studpid . . . (L, 3, 2)" where the lukewarm and nonreader had strong negative feelings about assigned reading while the avid reader had mixed feelings about assigned reading.

These responses are supported by question 22 in the questionnaire on which 69% of nonreaders and 41% of lukewarm readers seldom or very seldom enjoyed assigned reading (see Table 7).

As negatively as students viewed assigned reading, there was a way to make it worse, and that was to force reluctant students to read it aloud in class.

Reading Aloud

Sixteen lukewarm readers (10%), three avid readers (3%) and two nonreaders (12%) reported negative experiences with reading aloud ranging from kindergarten to high school. Nonreaders had the strongest negative feelings about reading aloud. "Like I said, sometimes when I read out loud I can't comprehend. But when I reading to myself I can read perfectly. I guess that's why I hate reading so much because I have to do it aloud at school so much (N, 1, 5)." This was

Table 9

Question 8 (feelings about being made to read aloud).

Types of readers	+	/	-
Avid	30%	52%	18%
Lukewarm	21%	51%	28%
Nonreader	12%	47%	41%
All	23%	52%	25%

Note. + = motivated student to read more, / = no effect on students' reading, - = turned student off to reading.

further indicated by students' responses to question 8 in the questionnaire (see Table 9).

Other

Another important negative school reading experience centered on book reports. Negative feelings about book reports were supported by the avid and nonreaders in their interviews as well as students' responses to question 23 in the questionnaire (see Table 10).

Table 10

Question 23 (feelings about book reports).

Types of readers	+	/	-
Avid	19%	55%	26%
Lukewarm	16%	50%	34%
Nonreader	12%	29%	59%
All	16%	51%	33%

Note. + = motivated student to read more, / = no effect on students' reading, - = turned student off to reading.

Students' Suggestions for Changing School Reading

* What suggestions do the three types of readers have for changing school reading experiences?

Nine lukewarm (6%) and six avid readers (6%) had specific suggestions for improving school reading. These suggestions were stated in the autobiographies and included

choosing more interesting books, emphasizing the importance of reading in lower grades, giving students freedom to choose reading material, emphasizing reading in lower grades, allow students to express their feelings about what they read rather than giving an analysis, and give students who need it more help with their reading.

Considering the number of students surveyed and the diversity of their backgrounds, the similarities of their responses in the autobiographies, questionnaire, and interviews are impressive in outlining their early experiences with reading, their reading interests, motivations to read and not to read, their positive and negative school experiences with reading, and their suggestions for changing school reading experiences.

Discussion

Motivations to Read

Agreeing with Sherrill's (1981) findings, the earliest reading memory held by most of the students is being read to by someone, usually their mother. Avid readers were read to more than lukewarm readers; lukewarm readers were read to more than nonreaders. Readers of all ages enjoy being read to (Sherrill, 1981 and Nunn, 1986), and this was true for the students in this study. Perhaps this is true because it brings up associations of the warm parent/child bonding that took place when the students were read to as children. At

all levels, teachers should read to their students to motivate them to read more.

Students are motivated to read on their own by reading materials that interest them. Even lukewarm and nonreaders will read on their own if they have reading materials that interest them. In selecting reading materials, teachers' concern for literary quality must be balanced by students' interest. During the elementary years, teachers can help students find interesting reading material by encouraging students' participation in summer reading clubs and book fairs. Teachers at all levels can promote reading by providing students access to a wide variety of reading materials.

Supporting Fadar's (1976) findings, students view freedom to choose their own reading material as an important motivation to read. This study found this to be especially true for lukewarm readers and nonreaders and less true for avid readers. Teachers can insure that students are exposed to interesting reading material by allowing students freedom of choice in what they read. This would allow those students who read for entertainment and escape, as well as those who read to fulfill a desire for life knowledge, to find materials that will relate to their lives.

The most powerful factor in high school students' reading is assigned reading. For lukewarm readers and nonreaders, assigned reading is seen as a very negative reading experience. In light of this, freedom of choice is

very important in motivating these two groups to read. For avid readers assigned reading is a motivation to read, often exposing these students to materials that they might not have chosen on their own, and thus motivate them to explore further a particular genre or author. Assigned reading is powerful because it is viewed as both a motivation to read and as a inhibitor to reading.

Discouraging Factors

In agreement with Nunn (1986) and Sherrill (1981), forcing students to read aloud is a powerful negative influence at every level. No student should be forced to read aloud against his or her will. Many students view being forced to read aloud as a powerful negative reading experience. Related to this is students' feelings about being forced to read specific materials.

While avid readers view assigned reading as a motivation to read, lukewarm and nonreaders view it as the number one inhibitor to reading. Reading assignments that have no relation to students' lives take up time students could be using to read materials that would motivate them to read more. Even when assigned reading makes a connection with students, it is still often seen as a negative experience simply because the students had the selection forced upon them. This negative reaction to coerced reading is seen in all negative student reactions to school reading experiences, especially their negative reactions to book reports, which is

supported by Gallo (1968). The power of assigned reading is also demonstrated in the fact that students went against previous research to name teachers as the biggest influence on their high school reading. The questionnaire did not get at whether teachers were positive or negative influences, but the autobiographies cited teachers as both positive and negative influences on students' reading through their assignment of reading. If teachers are to have a positive effect on students' reading, then the bulk of assigned reading should be limited to advanced classes, and students in all classes should be given some choice in selecting what they will read. This can be accomplished by the use of suggested book lists. For other classes, required reading should include only books that interest students as well as meet some quality standards.

While assigned reading is the most powerful factor affecting reading, the most cited reason for why high school students do not read is lack of time. This agrees with previous research (Carlsen, 1980; King, 1970; Norvell, 1958; Ross and Simone, 1982; and Terman and Lima, 1931.) If teachers value reading, they must give students in-class time for free reading. This can be accomplished through the use of a Sustained Silent Reading time used by the entire school or just in English classes (Levine, 1984). A reading workshop approach (Atwell, 1989) would also give students class time for individual reading as well as giving them the freedom to choose what they will read. In both approaches,

students select their own books and have a specified class time where they and the teacher read silently without interruption for a fixed time period. The main difference in the two approaches lies in students' written response to their reading. In the S.S.R. approach, there are no reports, questions, or records kept of students' reading while in Atwell's workshop response, students respond to their reading in dialogue journals that they write in with a partner.

Implications For Further Research

The broad scope of this study has generated several questions that lend themselves to further study. A major limitation of this study is the reliance on students' memories for the data. Further research might obtain additional information from students' parents, teachers, and school records to get a clearer picture of students' development as readers.

To insure a representative sample, schools were selected with the economic status of their students in mind. No effort was made to compare the reading experiences of students from different economic levels. In future research, economic status might be studied as a determinant of reader development.

Considering the power of assigned reading, future research might focus on students' reactions to specific assigned works to determine if there are works that appeal to a wide variety of students.

Summary

This study asked questions concerning the development of different groups of readers and the effects different experiences had on their development. Three types of reading groups were identified and their attitudes about reading were examined. Avid readers had the most positive attitudes toward reading followed by lukewarm readers and then nonreaders.

Factors that spurred extrinsic and intrinsic motivations to get students to read were interesting reading materials, summer reading clubs and book fairs, being read to, free reading, and the desire to acquire life knowledge. Avid readers were also motivated by assigned readings.

Factors that caused lukewarm and nonreaders to be turned off to reading were assigned reading and being forced to read aloud in class. The main reason that high school students do not read is that they are too busy with other activities.

The development of avid readers is marked by many shared reading experiences. Hopefully, future research will further isolate specific experiences so that parents and teachers can motivate more students to read.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Read the following questions carefully, and mark on your answer sheet the answer that is the closest to your answer. If the answer you mark is "Other," write your answer in the space provided on the answer sheet.

1. When I was a small child (1-5 years old), I remember seeing my mother and/or father reading:

a) Books, magazines, and newspapers

b) Magazines and newspapers

c) magazines

d) newspapers

e) Other _____

2. When I was a small child (1-5 years old), I remember seeing my mother and/or father reading:

   a) Very seldom (less than once per month)

   b) Seldom (1-3 days per month)

   c) Occasionally (1 day per week)

   d) Often (3-5 days per week)

   e) Very often (5-7 days per week)

3. When I was a small child (1-5 years old), my mother and/or father read to me:

   a) Very seldom (less than once per month)

   b) Seldom (1-3 times per month)

   c) Occasionally (1 time per week)

   d) Often (3-5 times per week)

   e) Very often (5-7 times per week)

4. When I was a small child (1-5 years old), my mother and/or father took me to the library:

   a) Very seldom (less than 1 time every 2 months)

   b) Seldom (1 time every 2 months)

   c) Occasionally (1 time per month)

   d) Often (1 time every 2 weeks)

   e) Very often (1-2 times per week)

5. When I was a small child (1-5 years old), I received books as gifts.

   a) No

   b) Yes

6. When I was a small child (1-5 years old), my mother and/or father encouraged me to read:

a) Very seldom

b) Seldom

c) Occasionally

d) Often

e) Very often

7. In elementary and junior high school, the biggest influence on my reading was:

a) My mother and/or father

b) Friends

c) Librarians

d) Teachers

e) Others _____

8. In elementary and junior high school, being made to read aloud in class:

a) Turned me off to reading

b) Had no effect on my reading

c) Motivated me to read more

9. In elementary and junior high school, I enjoyed my reading group.

a) I wasn't in a reading group

b) No opinion

c) No

d) Yes

10. In elementary and/or junior high school, I was a member of a book club.

a) No

b) Yes

11. In elementary and junior high school, reading contests:

a) Turned me off to reading

b) Had no effect on my reading

c) Motivated me to read more

12. In elementary and junior high school, I had a special place where I read.

a) No

b) Yes

13. In elementary and junior high school, I read certain favorite reading materials over and over.

a) No

b) Yes

14. In elementary and junior high school, I read when I wasn't supposed to (e.g., past bedtime, during class).

a) No

b) Yes

15. In elementary and junior high school, I read on my own:

a) Very seldom

b) Seldom

c) Occasionally

d) Often

e) Very often

16. In high school, I was or am a member of a book club.

a) No

b) Yes

17. In high school, I have or had a special place to read.

a) No

b) Yes

18. In high school, I have read or read certain favorite reading materials over and over.

a) No

b) Yes

19. In high school, I have read or read when I am not suppose to (e.g., past bedtime during class).

a) No

b) Yes

20. In high school, I have read or read on my own:

a) Very seldom

b) Seldom

c) Occasionally

d) Often

e) Very often

21. In high school, the biggest influence on my reading has been:

a) Mother and/or father

b) Friends

c) Librarians

d) Teachers

e) Other

22. In high school, I enjoyed the assigned readings:

a) Very seldom

b) Seldom

c) Occasionally

d) Often

e) Very often

23. In high school, book reports:

a) Turn me off to reading

b) Have no effect on my reading

c) Motivate me to read more

d) Other _____

24. In high school, I read primarily for:

    a) Pleasure

    b) To fulfill class assignments

    c) To obtain information

25. In high school, my favorite reading material has been:

    a) Books

    b) Newspapers

    c) magazines

    d) Other_____

26. In high school, do you prefer:

    a) Fiction

    b) Nonfiction

27. In high school, do you own any books?

    a) No

    b) Yes

28. In high school, do you subscribe to any magazines for yourself?

    a) No

    b) Yes

29. In high school, listening to my teacher read literature aloud is:

    a) A negative reading experience

    b) A neutral reading experience

    c) A positive reading experience

30. Which of the following descriptions best describes you as a reader?

    a) I spend a large portion of my free time reading for pleasure, and consider reading and literature an important part of my life.

    b) I read primarily for information or to fulfill class assignments.

    c) I rarely if ever read.

Using one of the following statements, respond to items 31 - 50 as honestly as possible. Your first reaction is probably the best.

a) I strongly agree

b) I agree

c) I am undecided

d) I disagree

e) I strongly disagree

31. Reading is for learning but not enjoyment

32. Money spent on books is well spent.

33. There is nothing to be gained from reading books.

34. Books are a bore.

35. Reading is a good way to spend spare time.

36. Sharing books in class is a waste of time.

37. Reading turns me on.

38. Reading is only for grade grubbers.

39. Books aren't usually good enough to finish.

40. Reading is rewarding to me.

41. Reading becomes boring after about an hour.

42. Most books are too long and dull.

43. Free reading doesn't teach anything.

44. There should be more time for free reading during the school day.

45. There are many books which I hope to read.

46. Books should not be read except for class requirements.

47. Reading is something I can do without.

48. A certain amount of summer vacation should be set aside for reading.

49. Books make good presents.

50. Reading is dull.